

**COUNCIL**  
**29 SEPTEMBER 2022**

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**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Children and Young People Portfolio.

**Early Intervention and Front Door**

2. A Domestic Abuse Worker has been identified and will be joining the Front Door Service no later than mid-September. The new post that has been created to work across CIAT and Building Stronger Families and will strengthen our response to domestic abuse. A new Health representative has also been identified and is due to join the Front Door Service late August/beginning of September. Discussions are currently being held with the MASH Operational Group around an increase in multi-agency representation within the front door, this will promote a 'Think Family' approach and it is hoped this will include Adult Social Care, probation, mental health, housing and other agencies as we grow the service.
3. Training in relation to the Professor Thorpe approach used at the Front Door has been held for Building Stronger Families staff and another session has been scheduled for 29 September. This training provides Building Stronger Families staff with an overview of the model used in CIAT when gathering information, this helps ensure that the right decisions are made for children and families at the right time. BSF workers can also use the approach within their work with their children, young people and families. The new CIAT/BSF successful candidate will benefit from this training as part of their induction.
4. The newly formed MEG (Missing and Exploited Group) continues to develop well and is held fortnightly. The MEG is instrumental in engaging all professionals in considering Harm Away From Home in a joined up way and assists social workers in completion of the Child Exploitation Matrix, informing children's plans and agreeing specific actions to reduce episodes in relation to children and young people going missing and reducing risk from exploitation

**Building Stronger Families Service**

5. Targeted and universal groups are building back up, with the majority now operating across the town, including Inspire to support victims of domestic abuse, and parenting workshops across a range of ages. Our delivery of programmes is moving forwards to reflect our family hubs transformation, incorporating groups and support for children of all ages, reflecting our move towards a clear family hubs model.

6. Building Stronger Families managers sit on the Neurodevelopmental Pathway Panel, and those children who don't meet the criteria for the pathway are signposted to other services, including having an early help assessment and support with parenting and behaviour management. Staff have completed training with Daisy Chain to ensure that they have skills relating to working with families with Neurodevelopmental difficulties, delivering different strategies and resources to parents and carers.
7. Older children and teenagers are coming into the centre to take part in Being Me and I am Me, which are programmes designed to promote identity, safety, confidence, and self-esteem. We identified most of these young people were girls and so have now adapted a new group aimed at boys which will be ran from C:The Box, aimed to target young people lacking confidence and showing early signs of dangerous risk taking, leaving them more vulnerable to exploitation.
8. There is development of a new programme of universal and targeted group work in progress. This will be launched in September and will further expand our town wide delivery, utilising community centres and schools. Reducing Parental Conflict and CAPVA, as well as a range of targeted work for older children and drop in sessions for advice will be added to our programme, alongside Early Years groups with a focus on speech and language development and socialisation for children and parents to help with Covid recovery.

#### **Young People's Engagement and Justice Service**

9. Both Duke of Edinburgh cohorts have completed their expedition and working on the final part of their award and the presentation evening is being held on 18 August.
10. Darlington have been successful in the Safer Streets 4 bid and recruitment of an Intervention Worker is underway, this will allow for a focus on increasing capacity in the ASB Pathway and will increase school input.

#### **Safeguarding Assessment and Care Planning including Children with Disabilities**

- (a) 305 children supported through a Child in Need (CiN) plan as at the end of June 2022. This is an increase from the position in June 2021 when 285 children that were supported through a Child in Need plan.
- (b) 104 children were subject to a Child Protection plan at the end of June 2022. This is an increase on the 95 children who were subject to Child Protection Plan at the end of June 2021.
- (c) The reconfiguration of the Life Stages Service is now complete. The team has been split into a 0-17 Children's Team and an 18+ Adults Team, each aligned to the relevant service area. The Children's team is now much more closely aligned to the other Safeguarding, Assessment & Care Planning teams. Initial reports indicate that the new configuration of teams is allowing for more timely transfers to Adults Services.

## **Looked After and Care Leaver statistics**

11. At the end of June 2022 there were:

- (a) 280 children were in care as of June 2022, 7 of which are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). This is an increase from the position at the end of May 2022 when there were 275 children in care, 6 of whom were UASC and an increase in the position at year end March 2022 when 273 children were in care, 3 of whom were UASC.
- (b) All 157 care leavers between 16 – 25 years have access to a personal advisor for support, advice, and guidance. The Looked After Through Care Service is in touch with all care leavers. 98.2 per cent of our care leavers aged 19-21 and 96.3 per cent of our care leavers aged 22-25 were in suitable accommodation at the end of June 2022. This was due to 1 young person (from each age bracket) being in custody.

## **Looked After Resources including Fostering, Residential, Family Group Conference and Keeping Families Together**

12. Since our marketing activities centred on the annual Foster Care Fortnight in May 2022, we have continued with activities to support foster carer and supported lodgings provider recruitment. We held 2 recruitment events at the Dolphin Centre and have more scheduled in Darlington over the coming months. We attended the Darlington Pride event on 13 August to promote fostering as a career. We have a consistent presence on social media as part of our marketing and recruitment plan.
13. On 16 August, our annual Foster Carer Strawberry Tea which took place, bringing together foster carers, their children and cared for children, and members of the fostering team to enjoy activities and refreshments in celebration of fostering.

## **Residential Services**

14. When Eldon Children's home re-locates, work will progress further to re-purpose the Eldon Street building into "Cedars" our short break and emergency care unit which will be funded for 2 years. One of the exiting residential managers has been recruited to the post of Registered Manager for Cedars, and we are in the process of recruiting a Registered Manager for Lancaster Close.
15. Gilling, Dunrobin and Eldon Street Children's homes all continue to have three young people in placement, so are at capacity. Harewood Hill Lodge, Short Breaks Unit provided care to 25 children in July, which represents 88% capacity, leaving scope for emergency situations should a child and their family require additional support. We had 3 young people leave in July as they turned 18 years of age.
16. Findings from recent OFSTED inspections of our Children's Homes have demonstrated that we are not consistently providing care to the high standards we aspire for and young people are not consistently achieving the outcomes we aspire for them. We have worked with OFSTED to put immediate actions in place where this has been needed and have developed a more detailed service improvement plan which recognises some of the wider

issues and challenges and actions as to how to address these and improve. The plans have been discussed and shared at Corporate Parenting Panel.

### **Family Group Conference (FGC)**

17. At the end of July, there were 31 families open to the team who are now sitting alongside Assessment and Safeguarding colleagues which is aiding in a more joint up approach to ensuring timely referral for FGC and Emergency Family Network Meetings.

### **Keeping Families Together (KFT)**

18. At the end of July, the team were supporting 6 families. The KFT social workers are currently supporting Assessment and Safeguarding colleagues, so the KFT service is being delivered by three support workers with assistance from the Team Manager. One of the team was successfully appointed to the Advanced Practitioner role, and commences in September 2022.

## **Education**

### **School Term Dates**

19. The school term date arrangements for Darlington maintained schools for the academic years 2024-2025 have been approved and will be published by the end of September 2022.
20. Darlington's Learning and Skills service was inspected by Ofsted on 21 to 24 June. Inspectors judged the service to be "Good" in all areas. Inspectors praised the "calm and welcoming learning environment" where learners feel valued and respected. The report noted that "Tutors successfully support and encourage adults to join learning programmes that help them to re-engage in education and gain the skills and attributes that they need for their next steps."

### **Youth Unemployment**

21. The 18-24 claimant count continues to fall. It dropped from a high of 13.8 per cent (1,005) in March 2021 to 6.2 per cent (450) in May 2022, this is the lowest it has been since September 2016. Although still higher than North-East average (5.2 per cent) and National average (4.5 per cent) it is the lowest in the Tees Valley.
22. The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) continues to perform well. This year YEI have had 221 starts and 208 positive outcomes, giving a total of 1093 starts and 993 positive outcomes (mainly into work), for the contract to date for DBC. The contract is due to end in July 2023.
23. The service has started addressing the need for progression routes for young people with SEND and will continue to work closely with this client group in Autumn 2022.

### **Children's Commissioning and Contracts**

24. In order to continue to diversify the range of commissioned support available, the Short Breaks framework contract for children and young people with disabilities was reopened

enabling new providers to join. Following the reopening, “We Care Support” were successfully appointed to Lot 6 for the provision of non-residential day care/short breaks operating from their Darlington base Henry’s House.

25. MHST Teams (Mental Health Support Teams) are supporting children in years 4 to 8 struggling with feelings of anxiety, fears or worries? This is delivered to Children and Families throughout Darlington in the summer holidays. The programme is an evidence-based intervention which will help parents learn some practical ways in which they can support their child.

### **Climate Change**

26. We continue to review and discuss across all teams ways to support energy efficiency, e.g how to cut waste and encourage small changes such as use of energy-saving devices and unplugging electrical equipment.

**Councillor Jon Clarke**  
**Children and Young People Portfolio**